

Meeting	Customer Services Sub Committee
Date	Thursday 6th June 2024
Time	10.00am – 12.00pm
Location	Mt McKinley – Atria / Teams



Core Members:	
Paul Hayward (PH)	Co-optee Board Member & Chair
Tom Forty (TF)	Operations Director
Charlotte Burrows (CB)	Personal Assistant & Minute Taker
Mitch Allen (MA)	Assistant Director of Housing
Chris Thomas (CT)	Scrutiny Panel Chair
Ros Bridges (RB)	Corporate Director
Jenny Daisley (JD)	Client Officer (Shropshire Council)
Steve Robinson (SR)	Board Member
Presenters:	
Eve Blezard (EB)	HQN
Lynn Fonseca (LF)	Scrutiny Panel Vice Chair
Apologies:	
Emma Jones (EJ)	Customer Relationship Manager
Julia Buckley (JB)	Board Member and Chair
Eleanor Rayers (ER)	Tenant Board Member
Yordan Tolev (YT)	Tenant Board Member
Richard Amos (RA)	Tenant Board Member

Item No.		Who	When
1.	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u>		
	Rosanna Davenport, Governance Manager, started the meeting with an explanation that as RA was unable to attend, we did not have quorum so any decisions, wouldn't be able to be made at this meeting and would have to be made virtually afterwards. PH suggested we went around the room, and everyone introduced themselves. Apologies for JB, EJ, ER& RA		
2.	<u>Declaration of Interest</u>		
2.1	No declarations of interest		
3.	<u>Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising</u>		
3.1	Minutes of the last meeting have been approved.		
3.2	MA updated to advise that the vulnerability policy is in the process of being rolled out and that we are now reviewing existing associated policies and how they interact with the vulnerability policy. A		

	procedure is currently being developed by Neighbourhoods to ensure the policy is embedded.		
3.3	<p>TF updated that work is progressing to develop the operations performance framework. We had previously received strong feedback and a request from FAR for all performance measures to be robust and accompanied with appropriate definitions and methodology calculations.</p> <p>These are being developed with certain measures prioritised. This will take time to progress, and Committee will receive information as it becomes available. Priority will be given to Repairs, Income and Customer Satisfaction.</p> <p>ACTION: First set of new measures focussing on operational / customer issues to be developed and added to the overall performance management framework.</p>	RB	
3.4	<p>RB updated that EJ had been off work for a period of time and that some actions remained outstanding. Some actions relating to customer engagement have slowed due to capacity issues and sickness. This is expected to be the case until the restructure process is complete.</p> <p>Priority actions relating to Complaints had been progressed by RB and were included in the update on the agenda.</p>		
3.5	<p>TF confirmed the new policies hadn't yet been promoted in the newsletter but were planned to be included in the next one.</p> <p>ACTION: Update on neighbourhood policies to be included in newsletter</p>	RB	
3.6	<p>PH requested that matters arising and updates are summarised at the end of the minutes for improved governance.</p> <p>ACTION: CB to ensure minutes from this meeting include a summary of the matters arising with a written update from staff.</p>	CB	
4.	<u>Operational Performance Review</u>		
4.1	<p>RB provided an overview of the paper.</p> <p>SR stated that he didn't get any sense of how STaR were learning from performance within from the report. It was described as a statement of number without any clear explanation regarding why performance was where it was, nor an explanation of why performance was off target.</p> <p>SR gave the example of minor voids change of 36 days to 83 days and the specific comment in the report that it "jumps in time to time" was criticised. It doesn't explain causes of performance and proposed next steps. SR was seeking assurance that the management team is on top</p>		

	of this. PH supported SR's point about improvements needed to the quality of reporting.		
4.2	<p>TF and RB agreed with SR. TF explained that this had already been identified and that the management team had already implemented a new monthly process for the collation, review and reporting of performance. The first monthly approach for this will be end of May performance in June. TF and RB confirmed that a more detailed and quality report will be issued to Board in June 2024.</p> <p>RB noted that a new Performance Analyst Role is currently under recruitment and will be key in helping to improve this.</p> <p>SR noted and accepted that we are working on improvement and will look to see improvement in future reports.</p> <p>ACTION: Review quality and detail included within performance reporting and make improvements prior to Board and coming meetings.</p>	RB	
4.3	On specific performance issues, TF explained that there are challenges with some empty homes after they become ready to let. There are delays in finding residents, particularly in some two-bedroom properties following a policy change by Shropshire Council. This has caused challenges for landlords across Shropshire, and we are working with the Council and other landlords to see where we can improve.		
4.4	TF explained that we are now exploring how these properties can be used to support Shropshire Council with temporary accommodation, but that we need to manage and balance our risk exposure and impact on wider services. Wider improvements being tested include developing our own waiting list and increasing use of social media.		
5.	<u>Voice of the Customer Report</u>		
5.1	RB shared a presentation to Committee showing the latest Tenant Satisfaction Measure results which had just become available.		
5.2	SR asked about the drivers of complaint when people are complaining about the repairs service. SR asked whether complaints were about the quality of repair, staff behaviour, or whether it is about repairs not being done after repairs are reported.		
5.3	<p>RB commented that formal complaints about repairs are principally around communication about repairs that are booked in. TF added that what we are seeing is that complaints often relate to the length of time we're taking to complete a repair, when communication becomes more important. SR stated that he would like to see a next level of analysis of complaints that give more information on the complaint drivers. He didn't get a sense of whether it was systems, culture, process, etc.</p> <p>ACTION: Explore adding in a further level of categorisation into the complaint reporting.</p>	RB	
5.4	RB outlined that we have established a Complaints working group to support improvements. The working group review all complaints from		

	the last fortnight and discuss what's been learnt and better solutions going forward. This will improve our understanding and information we can then share with Committee.		
5.5	PH stated that around 75% of residents who have made a complaint do not know whether it was a formal complaint, or what part of the process they are in. PH would like to understand how staff are handling as it's a key area of concern. RB advised that we are increasing our communication and promotion of the complaints process in all areas of the business to ensure all staff encourage and log complaints effectively.		
6.	<u>Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment / Annual Review</u>		
6.1	RB gave an overview of the paper and welcomed questions. PH asked why there was a spike in Stage 1, during Nov and March, what are the reasons for that in those months? RB explained that she wasn't sure on this as learning and reviews were not a standard practice previously. The new approach will help to improve this and RB explained that she will future reports will have further information to explain such trends.		
6.2	SR was trying to understand how widely the report is shared within the organisation, so everyone understands that we're a learning organisation. RB replied that it isn't widely circulated as a report currently, but that we will be looking to include more updates to staff on a regular basis through newsletters.		
7.	<u>Neighbourhood Management Update</u>		
7.1	<p>Mitch gave an overview of his report, summarising the key activity and changes ongoing in driving forwards our Neighbourhood Service and welcomed questions.</p> <p>PH mentioned that it was positive to see customer involvement in the process and CT supported this. CT explained that there were a few changes proposed to the inspection form, and some more areas to consider. It is important that the form is easy to understand.</p>		
7.2	<p>SR noted that the report was positive and that he supported the direction of travel. He understood why the report was explaining the activity being completed to start this work, but would like to see more information on the actual work completed in future reports.</p> <p>TF explained that the report outlined the work ongoing to build the foundations to the new neighbourhood management approach, and agreed with SR that in the future the report would need to update Committee on the outcomes of future inspections.</p> <p>ACTION: Ensure future report includes updates on neighbourhood inspections completed. Next detailed update to be Autumn 2024.</p>	MA	
7.3	CT explained that the customer needs to understand that the inspections and STaR's focus is as much around the home and building as it is the individual home. CT noted that it would be useful to include an update in the Newsletter of the work we are doing and definitions of what a neighbourhood actually is. I.e. ot just the front door of the home.		

7.4	CT noted the importance of working with repairs and ensuring that there is enough time given to look at the full neighbourhoods. MA noted this.		
7.5	PH was surprised that the inspections had been stopped since covid and customers haven't asked about them. TF responded to agree, but also that it is important to note the generally high levels of satisfaction with neighbourhoods. Whilst there is still areas for improvement, staff are on site regularly, and TSM results identify that performance is good. Although noted that we don't want to be complacent.		
7.6	SR is very passionate around neighbourhood management and asked how the process will look to work closer with the Council as STaR are not responsible for everything in a neighbourhood. This could include abandoned cars, potholes, communal maintenance, etc. TF explained that with the new Client Liaison Officer at the Council there is a route to channel any issues through and that periodically, we will be inviting stakeholders to join inspections where appropriate.		
7.	TF explained that the first stage of work is to get the process up and running, to begin reviewing our neighbourhoods, and identifying quick wins. Stage 2 of the process will be developing a clearer strategy and plan for neighbourhoods with communities. Developing a standard, and neighbourhood plans. These can, and will be based on data and insight of each community which we can develop reporting around.		
7.8	SR suggested that we think through how we will involve all key stakeholders, but particularly local elected members. ACTION: MA to provide an update at the next Committee including the outcome of completed pilots and inspections.	MA	
8.	<u>Strategy Approval</u>		
8.1	Tom gave an overview of his report, and identified that the strategies were evolutions on those presented to Committee previously and welcomed questions. PH feels that we're asking a lot in terms of the aspiration of the strategies. There is a lot to achieve, and measure. PH sought some clarification and assurance of how we will monitor this, and how Committee will get assurance of delivery. TF explained that a Programme approach is being created with a detailed plan of over 100 projects to be delivered over three years. This will have a programme steering group with regular meetings, key measures and can be reported through board. Projects are aligned to strategies, and so an update could be presented to Committee 6-monthly. ACTION: Update Committee on progress with the strategy delivery plans in November / December 2024.	TF/ RB	

<u>9.</u>	<u>Annual Report 2023/24</u>		
9.1	<p>RB gave an overview of her report and welcomed questions. It is proposed to bring the report back to this meeting in September and then the AGM in October.</p> <p>PH said that he felt last year's report was good and along the right lines for what we should consider this year. It is important to get customers views, and for us to consider the opportunity for paper copies and online version.</p> <p>SR did identify that it is quite difficult with annual reports, as they are not the most widely read of documents but do need to be done. Similarly, SR was Interested in what CT has to say as the customer representative on the Committee. CT agreed the easiest way to distribute is the website.</p> <p>ACTION: Comments to be noted and report developed to bring back to Committee in September</p>	RB	
<u>10.</u>	<u>Scrutiny Review Report</u>		
10.1	EB and LF joined the meeting at this point. EB led a presentation of the outcomes of the Customer Scrutiny Panel on the Repairs service. The report had been circulated to Committee with the papers.		
10.2	CT and LF explained that they had found the experience interesting & was that it was great outside look in. CT also commented on the support and help provided by HQN and EB and thanked EB for this.		
10.3	EB outlined that the Scrutiny Panel had completed their review and found that StaR's general level of performance was good. There were areas for improvement, but nothing the Panel had found that was systematic or fundamental failures. It was noted that the professionalism and attitude of STaR staff delivering services and supporting the review was excellent.		
10.4	CT explained that most customers do not understand how the process works and the complexity of getting the right person to a customer's house to complete the repair.		
10.5	PH acknowledged that it was an excellent report, and was welcomed by the Committee. It gives reassurance that everything is going the right way and acknowledged that communication is key. LF commented that communication can be good one day and not the next – the inconsistency can be frustrating.		
10.6	<p>SR agreed it was very positive and special thanks to CT and the team, hopefully it will be the first review of many. SR directly asked SMT members, what their response to the review was, and how will we oversee an improvement plan for going forward?</p> <p>TF responded to confirm that he had already fed back to the panel that it was an excellent report. TF summarised the challenge session</p>		

	<p>that was held between the panel and SMT, where there wasn't a great deal of disagreement or challenge. There were a few points of clarification on recommendations which have been updated to allow us to respond formally to these. TF noted that we will like to take an 'internal audit' approach to this and provide a formal management response to each recommendation and a proposed timescale.</p> <p>TF proposed that there is a quarterly update to the Scrutiny Panel. PH – was seeking reassurance that findings have been followed up and acknowledged that CT being on the Committee will help to raise any areas of concern the panel has.</p> <p>ACTION: Coordinate a formal response to the report</p>	TF/RB	
<u>11.</u>	<u>Operational Risk Register</u>		
11.1	TF provided an overview, noting that there were no material changes to risk levels. PH said this was a very useful report and welcomed it to continue being reviewed at Committee.		
<u>12.</u>	<u>Forward Plan Review</u>		
12.1	Nothing identified		
<u>13.</u>	<u>AOB</u>		
13.1	Nothing to Declare		

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Agenda Item	Action	Who	Status
	ACTION: First set of new measures focussing on operational / customer issues to be developed and added to the overall performance management framework.	RB	
	ACTION: Update on neighbourhood policies to be included in newsletter	RB	
	ACTION: CB to ensure minutes from this meeting include a summary of the matters arising with a written update from staff.	CB	
	ACTION: Review quality and detail included within performance reporting and make improvements prior to Board and coming meetings.	RB	
	ACTION: Ensure future report includes updates on neighbourhood inspections completed. Next detailed update to be Autumn 2024.	RB	

	ACTION: MA to provide an update at the next Committee including the outcome of completed pilots and inspections.	MA	
	ACTION: Update Committee on progress with the strategy delivery plans in November / December 2024.	TF/RB	
	ACTION: Coordinate a formal response to the report	TF/RB	